

University College

LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY.

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

1871.

F5012-1871-22

The EDITH *and* LORNE PIERCE
COLLECTION *of* CANADIANA



Queen's University at Kingston

E
A

20

1

1

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

Literary and Scientific Society,

BY

THE PRESIDENT, W. H. RENNELSON, M.A.,

OCTOBER 27TH, 1871,

THE REV. JOHN McCAUL, LL.D.,

IN THE CHAIR.

PRINTED FOR THE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LITERARY AND
SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY.

Hist/LP Spec. PK Caud. 38 #2510 Aug 1970

May 1970
33 # 2510
Spec. Bk. Comm. 1
Hist. / P

The University College

LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY.

Patrons :

REV. J. McCAUL, LL.D., M.R.I.A. President of University College.	
H. H. CROFT, Esq., D.C.L., F.C.S.	E. J. CHAPMAN, Esq., Ph. D.
GEORGE BUCKLAND, Esq.	LL.D.
J. B. CHERRIMAN, Esq., M.A., F.C.P.S.	G. T. KINGSTON, Esq., M.A.
DANIEL WILSON, Esq., LL.D., F.S.A. Scot.	H. A. NICHOLSON, Esq., M.D., D. Sc., M.A., Ph.D., F.G.S.E.
	REV. G. P. YOUNG, M.A.

President :

W. H. RENNELSON, M.A.

Vice-Presidents :

J. FLETCHER.

J. H. LONG.

Recording Secretary :

J. D. CHRISTIE.

Corresponding Secretary :

J. WHITE.

Secretary of Committees :

J. CRERAR.

Treasurer :

L. A. McPHERSON.

Curator :

A. Q. MILLER.

Councillors :

A. C. KILLAM.

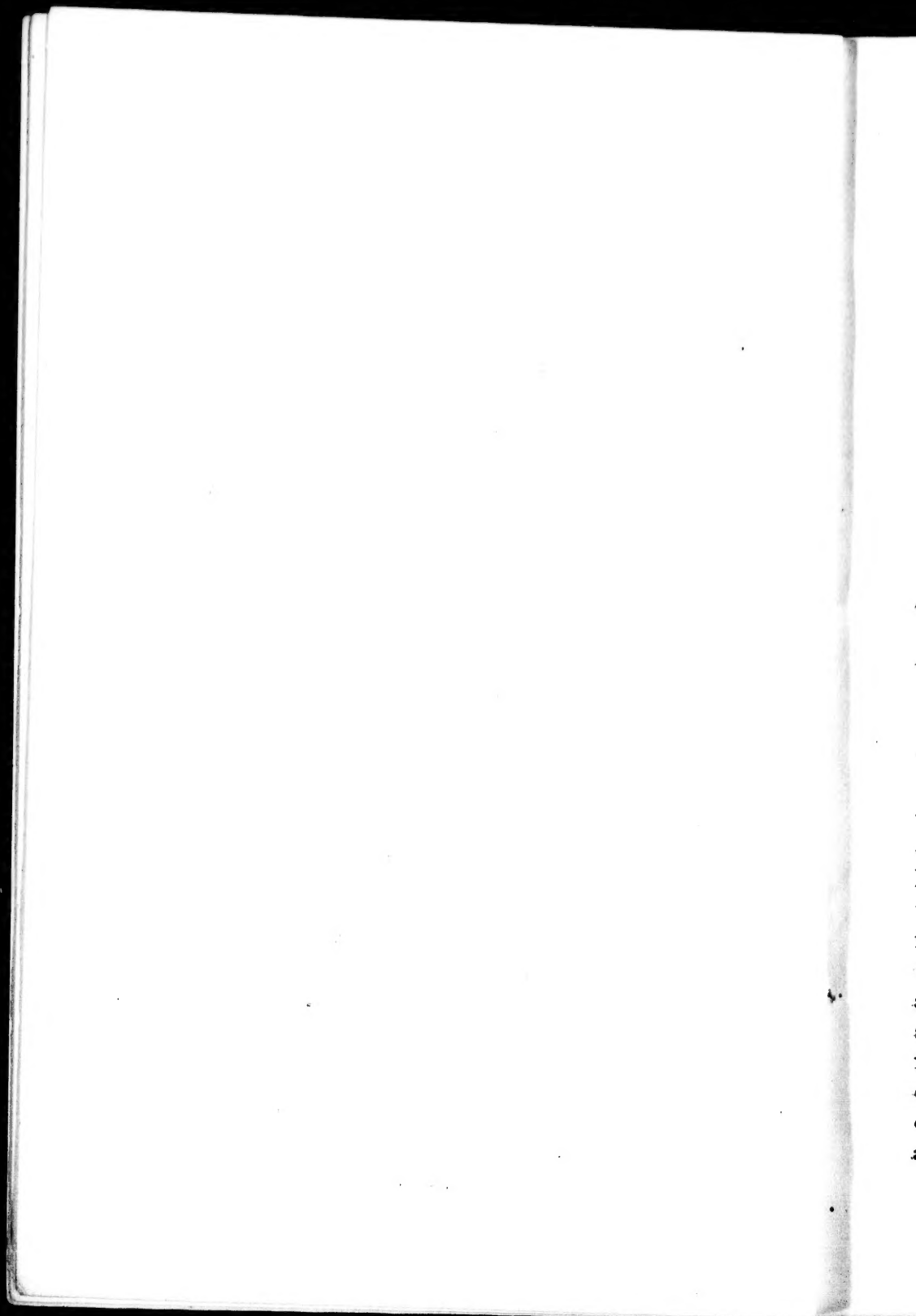
A. A. McDONALD.

W. BARWICK.

T. T. McBETH.

A. DAWSON.

3029624



INAUGURAL ADDRESS.

*To the Members of the University College Literary and
Scientific Society.*

GENTLEMEN,—

We are met together to-night publicly to inaugurate the seventeenth year of the existence of this Society. It would be a pleasing duty to me to review its history during those years that are past, noting some of its earlier difficulties,—an account of which would be seen to reflect much honor on those who were its guardians during the period of its infancy,—and contrasting them with some of its successes of later times,—successes which indicate the vigorous vitality of which it is possessed, and which show that it has already become an integral part of University College, and one of which that institution could ill afford to be deprived. But as this task has been very satisfactorily performed by several of my predecessors, it is the less desirable that I should undertake it now, especially as there are many other subjects equally calling for our attention, some of which I am unwilling altogether to omit from my remarks to-night.

My first duty is to tender you my sincere thanks for the confidence you have reposed in me, in deeming me worthy to occupy a position so honorable and responsible as that I now do. I say the *confidence*, for I consider the mere *honor* of the position, great as that is, of very small moment in comparison with the confidence which has led to its bestowal. I hope it is unnecessary to make any promises with regard to the manner in which I shall aim at discharging my duties; suffice it to say that I enter upon the responsibilities of my office with a most thankful appreciation of the benefits I have myself received at the hands of this Society, with the profoundest confidence in what it is able to do for such of its members as faithfully perform the duties it imposes and embrace the privileges it offers, and with a settled conviction that the young man who completes his collegiate training and thrusts himself upon the world as an educated man, and who is still wanting in those qualifications which it is the design of this Society to bestow, is unworthy of his Alma Mater, unfitted for the age in which he lives, and likely to prove a failure in life.

A custom, already time-honoured, has established, as one of the duties of my office, the delivering of an INAUGURAL ADDRESS at the first Public Meeting of the College Session. I need not deny that in obedience to this demand I find myself beset with grave difficulties. A path may be all the more easy to tread that it has been trodden before; but that circumstance will render it all the more difficult always to find something new. The path I am to tread to-night has been frequently trodden before, and I fear that the way-side flowers also.

have been well gathered. It is not wonderful that this should be the case, for the very names of those who have preceded me in the journey are a guarantee that the observations which have been made have been of the most careful character. I do not need to inform you that the position I now hold has been occupied by men who bid fair for a fame which will not be circumscribed by the limits of either their own age or country.

I propose, however, to offer for your consideration tonight some thoughts on THE LITERATURE IN RELATION TO THE PROGRESS OF THE AGE.

What is the end of my existence?—What is my nature?—What is my destiny?—are questions which deeply concern every one of us, and which philosophers from the time of Thales, and moralists from the time of Moses, have urged upon our attention. Whither are we drifting?—On what principles of right have we founded our national constitution?—Is our prosperity real or only imaginary?—Are we keeping abreast of the wave of national advancement? are questions that press themselves upon the attention of any community or people. But there are questions which concern mankind of wider scope and more philanthropic view than even these. The speculations of the true philosopher are not national only, though perhaps they are so in their more immediate relations. They must embrace those universal and enduring principles which are common to humanity at large, and on which are laid the foundations of universal progress.

It is on this account that I would rather treat of *human* than of *national* progress; because, as I conceive, the time is past for the investigation of facts and

principles which belong only to individual nations. Politicians and ambitious schemers may content themselves with trafficking in the vanities of men, and the animosities of nations. The statesman and the historian must understand that those sections of our race, which we call nations, though they render their thoughts in different tongues, and though seas roar and mountains rise between them, are still but the segments which make up the great circle of humanity. Their generalizations must be based upon those principles of the human heart which are in accordance with universal truth, and not upon those partial manifestations of truth, that are made in the too often narrow-minded and selfish aspirations of nations, and which will, as a general rule, be mixed with error just in proportion as they are partial.

It is marvellous how thoroughly the individual gives his character to the nation. To such an extent is this the case, that it is often exhibited in the latter more than in the former. I think history will show more intense selfishness on the part of nations than of individuals. Individual folly and vice have been great enough. National folly and vice have, if possible, been greater still. There is something in the excitement of companionship that adds enthusiasm to folly, and an attractiveness even to the loathsomeness of vice. There have been times in the history of our race, when, with exceptions that scarcely call for notice, *self* was the paramount object of interest to the individual, when the proudest boast of the nation was the numbers of the enemy it had slain, and its highest ambition to slay as many more. Nor have we so far escaped from the great

slough of selfishness in which humanity has floundered so long, as that we can afford either to sneer at, or condescendingly to pity, those who have gone before us, even although many of them appear to have sounded that slough to its very depths. But we hope that we have at least escaped, and stand on surer footing.

Very much of the past existence of mankind has been a dark valley into which the light of truth has but dimly shone. We are prone to think, and certainly we think rightly, that we, of these later ages, have been favoured with clearer revelations with regard to the momentous questions of the destiny of our race, the true ambition of the heart, the means of attaining to the proper relationship between nation and nation, and the true exaltation of man. We have little ground yet for assuming that we have reached the summit of the hill, where the light is clear and these revelations are perfect. But no one can deny that we have more light than many of our fellow-men have possessed, that we have made at least some progress, that we stand somewhere between the valley and the mountain top.

From this position, it becomes us carefully to view the past, to mark the steps by which we have risen, if we have risen at all, and assure ourselves whether or not these steps have been wisely taken. For it does not follow, simply because we have cast off some of the follies that have proved fatal to others, that we have not replaced them by others, just as certain to prove fatal to us. While we have lost some of the vices of the ancients, we may have lost some of their virtues also. We may be possessed of more wisdom than they, but even that may not be sufficient to save us from failure. With

all our hopes, we can scarcely look for perfect success. Whether, however, our existence is to be a partial success or a great failure, the light of futurity only will reveal. But, whatever be the sentence that future ages may pass upon ours, we are certainly not too severe when we say, that the failures of humanity in most of those that are past have been of the most complete and melancholy character. What is the whole history of the world but one of tyranny and bloodshed? Kings have lived by the death of kings, sovereigns have ruled and subjects have obeyed, on the principle that opposition to the one was the highest interest of the other. Nations have risen to power on the ruins of nations. Might has been the test of right. Race after race has made a vigorous start in the race of progress. This has been done only with sufficient force for a sufficient length of time to show the measureless powers of the human mind. The flagging time has come, and the light, which burst so auspiciously, has gone out again in barbaric darkness. Thus, again and again, it has been demonstrated, that the most gorgeous structure that mind can erect, must crumble away if its foundations have been laid in error. Ages of men have followed one another like the waves of ocean, one rising as the other sank, sometimes swelling into the most splendid proportions, and then subsiding into moral and intellectual death. If, as we all believe, man is capable of indefinite improvement, then, viewing the race in relation to such a contemplated state, its history is undoubtedly a record of failures.

There is, however, an evident gradation in these failures. National existence has realized a higher ideal in

modern than in ancient times. And when failure has followed, as the result of false elements in that ideal, the disaster has not been so complete and demoralizing. Those lands, in which were cradled the growing elements of Babylonian splendour, Persian greatness, and Egyptian enlightenment, now exist only as moral and intellectual deserts; while the shivered monuments remain only here and there, which testify of a power that once boasted itself to be eternal. Lovely Athens, the birthplace of refinement, is now a sacred mausoleum on which nations, to the end of time, will not cease to strew the richest flowers of poesy, as upon the grave of a departed sister. Those Attic skies, under which beauty was born, have wept over its deathbed also. But that beauty and that refinement are embalmed in a literature, which has ever since supplied the models in poetry, in rhetoric, and in philosophy. The mighty empire of the Cæsars has been a failure also. But its failure has not been so complete as that of Greece. If, in its rise, it never rose so high, in its downfall it never fell so low. If it fell short of Greece's standard in its exaltation of the intellectual, it grasped an element of truth, which Greece had missed, in its greater regard for the material. It never reached as high a standard in poetry or in eloquence, but it reached one much higher in national ambition and the government of its people. How very far it fell short of the true standard of human government, is only too clearly indicated by the greatness of its fall. But, though that fall was great, it was not complete. The smouldering embers of its civilization, which were well nigh extinguished by the torrent of barbarism that was poured upon them, when fanned by the breath

of younger and more vigorous nations, burst into a flame that has illuminated three-fourths of Europe with its light. This is the last downfall of a great empire that the world has seen or is likely ever to see. A longer period has elapsed since the downfall of Rome than had elapsed between that date and the downfall of Greece ; yet it can scarcely be said that a great nation has fallen during the interval. And with few, if any exceptions, no important nation is now seriously threatened with dissolution. When dissatisfied demagogues prophesy the decay of a great monarchy, or the bursting asunder of a great republic, it would not, perhaps, be offering a very absurd objection to remind them of the great Babylonian's dream. That dream has been literally fulfilled in the destruction of the fourth great empire, which was to be partly strong and partly broken. May we not infer, unless facts render the inference impossible, that the stone, by which that great destruction was to be accomplished, contained in it the wanting element in the civilization of man, and was destined to introduce an era, when, in order to the achievement of great successes, great failures would no longer be necessary ? This may not be arriving at truth by a philosophical method, but, if we only reach the truth, we need not perplex ourselves about the method. At all events, the time has arrived when might has, for the most part, ceased to be the test of right, and when nations, as well as men, have recognized a great and governing motive to action other than their own aggrandizement. Now-a-days it is not necessary for the settlement of a point in international law, that one of the disputants be exterminated or enslaved. This wonderful enlightenment in

the science of government is the special glory of our own age. Only a century has passed since, by her blundering misrule, England drove from filial attachment into bitter hostility a portion of her own subjects, and so deprived herself of the wealth of half a continent, and the lustre which its glories would have added to her name. Then, the world learned wisdom from her folly. Only a year ago, her government dared to assert, and succeeded in proving, that it was possible for England's sword to rust in its scabbard and her glory remain still undimmed. This time, the world has drawn its lessons from her wisdom.

There is another respect in which our age shows a great improvement over any that has preceded it. Not only have we managed to bring together those elements of true civilization which will generally turn the balance in favor of success, but we have learned also to submit both successes and failures to philosophical analysis; so that, now, we are enabled to remove from our principles of action whatever error they contain, before the disaster to which it tends comes upon us. It is not likely that the Persian, who lived to watch the waning glories of his nation, reflected that there had been causes at work which could not possibly have been followed by any other result. Nor is it likely that even the refined Greek, in whose religious creed the doctrine of fate held a considerable place, would believe that there was any other reason for the extinction of Grecian greatness than the invincible strength of the Macedonian phalanx, or that he traced the changing honors of race to any other cause than the fickleness of fortune. In marked contrast to that want of philo-

sophy which plunged men into utter darkness, and to that philosophy, also, which resigned itself to fate, the sphere of the modern statesman is, reasoning from the past, to anticipate the future, and the province of government is the prevention, rather than the remedying, of evils that threaten the national prosperity. This philosophical scrutiny of the events of history is fast revealing to us the principles of progress, and, in so far as it is successful in arriving at truth, it is a sure guarantee that the interruptions to human progress in the future will be both fewer and less alarming than they have been in the past.

But how are we to unlock the secrets of the human mind, and disclose to view the wealth of by-gone thought? Literature must be our key. Perhaps we must grant that, among the agencies of progress, literature has only held a secondary place. What influence it *has* exerted has been rather indirect than direct. It would be difficult to show that, in the days of Greece and Rome, literature was productive of any very marked improvements. Owing to the complete severance of the thinking from the unthinking classes, and the impossibility of the literary productions of the former class falling, to any great extent, within the reach of the latter, the literature was rather an appendage to the civilization of these countries than part of it. It is quite probable that the Homeric poems exert a greater influence over the minds of cultured men in our own day than they ever did over the nation in whose language they were written. Nor is it clear that our own magnificent literature has acted in any very direct way towards the improvement of

the conditions of the race. It was a growing desire for knowledge, already begun among the upper classes, that led to the revival of classical learning in the sixteenth century. Contact with an educated aristocracy begot a similar desire among the people; and this led to the establishment of schools and debating societies, newspapers and circulating libraries, the popularizing of the sciences, and the growth of a spirit of independence. This, however, was the work of the century immediately preceding our own. And, even now, while men of all classes are eagerly crying out for knowledge, its diffusion is more due to the agencies of education and journalism than to the more enduring productions of the master minds. While, however, literature does not appear to be the most essential agency of progress, and does not assume this to be its primary object, there is another sphere in which it is altogether invaluable.

The chief glory of literature is that it gives an absolute security against retrogression. As long as it endures,—and its destruction seems now altogether beyond the reach of possibility,—the human mind can never again be plunged into the darkness of barbarism nor ever again lose sight of that exalted destiny which is in store for humanity, and which is, even now, opening up to its view. It has been called the mould in which the knowledge of a country is cast. But it gives us more than the mere material of knowledge. It reveals to us the very processes by which that knowledge was reached. We may read in it, also, the character of the times in which we live, and from it prognosticate much that is to come. It is at once the record of the past, the exponent of the present, and the index of the

future. Viewing it in this light, I would suggest—and only suggest—a few thoughts on the literature of our own age.

As, however, literature is to be taken as the index of progress, we must know what the elements of progress are, and these we will find in the analysis of the human mind. When we know in what respects a truly noble man differs from a savage, we know what progress means. When we say that man is endowed with intellectual and moral faculties, we have enumerated all the capacities which place him on a higher level than the brute creation. In order to progress, both these elements must be progressive. It is possible for the intellectual to advance while the moral is stationary or almost altogether wanting, as history and experience alike will testify. But the moral cannot advance while the intellectual is retrogressive, for the former will depend for its activity on a knowledge of relationships which the latter must understand and recognize. In order to true progress and enduring achievements, both must be progressive.

A comparison of Grecian with modern European and American civilization, in its best forms, will show this to be true. In the former case, the intellectual development, though great, was limited and exclusive; in the latter, it is national and diffusive. Among the Greeks generally, the most essential elements of morality were utterly unknown as governing principles in life, simply because the relationships out of which they arise were not understood. Little was known of the beauty of love or the sacredness of affection. And when the leaders in morals, as well as in knowledge, ignore all

those heaven-knit ties which bind the family together in sacred and indissoluble union, alas for the morality of the nation ! There are already within the national heart the seeds of corruption and decay ; and if, in the absence of a generally diffused knowledge, and of those moral sentiments which bind man to man, and give at once independence to the individual and unity to the nation, we can see the causes which led to the overthrow of a nation which only wanted Christianity to complete its enlightenment, what room was there left for hope in the case of those other nations which robbed their subjects, not only of instruction, but also of liberty of thought and a'l that independence which is essential to manhood ? Our civilization is yet far from having reached the standard of moral perfection ; but we have at least learned that the thing most essential to the well-being of any people is the possession of a refined and active moral sentiment. It is the greatest power in human nature. But, while the last three centuries have been striving to bring it into action, confidence in its operations, as opposed to those of a material force, is the characteristic and the glory of an age which has scarcely more than begun to be.

If these are the elements of all healthful progress, how far does our literature show them to be living and progressive now ?

This is an age of books. It is an age when everybody reads. But the former statement does not prove the present to be an Augustine age in literature, nor does the latter that all men are duly instructed. It is to be feared that our literature is remarkable rather for its quantity than its quality ; and it is quite certain

that, while all men read, but very few have learned to think, and to make men think is the true aim of all education. That end has not yet been reached, but it can already be descried in the distance. In order that it may be reached, we must have, on the one hand, a desire for knowledge on the part of the people, and, on the other, instruction suited to their wants,—a literature they can understand. Our age is fulfilling both of these conditions.

One of the most striking characteristics of our literature, generally, is that it comes close to the heart. It is permeated with a real human feeling; it is fraught with questions intensely interesting to all who call themselves men; in it, life is a reality. The destiny of man is its all-absorbing problem. The harshness and pedantry of old writers have been laid aside; the people will not brook obscurities. Philosophy must make itself clear, for all classes are willing to understand it. It must be a philosophy which comes into relation to every-day life, for the hearts of all are open to its influences. Above all, it must be true, for they are willing to be subject to its rule.

Science is fast coming up to the required conditions. The arcana of nature are being compelled to unfold their mysteries, and instruct men in the laws of life and in the grand simplicity of the Creator's plan. Popular science is a thing almost of yesterday; and, even now, its discoveries come almost too fast to be chronicled. It would be useless without inquiring minds; but the inquiring minds are ready to receive it, and by it they are drawn, as by magnetic force, into the very midst of the most sublime of intellectual problems. Here, in

full measure, is the intellectual element of progress ; here man finds that exercise for his faculties, and those stores of knowledge, which will not only the better fit him for his duties, but also contribute to the nobility of his life.

With the philosophy of nature the philosophy of mind has not kept pace. The majority of men have scarcely been so much as informed that the mind is governed by laws, while many of those who have, regard them as either undiscoverable or without practical advantage when discovered. It would not be difficult to prove that neither of these suppositions is true ; and it is far from clear why the investigation of mind should be less intellectual, less interesting, or less ennobling than that of matter.

But the development of man's capacities embraces a wider sphere than the intellectual alone. There are the moral and emotional elements, which claim a place equally high. What does science do for them ? It is true that knowledge, even of scientific subjects, should afford a more comprehensive view of the obligations of mankind ; it is true that there is something ennobling in the grandeur of the thoughts to which science introduces us ; but, it must be granted, that it alone would make but partially developed men. One of the most eminent of our scientific writers has confessed that such training would not be complete. Something else is needed for the exaltation and the refinement of the æsthetic faculty, and that something is supplied by literature and art.

The two great branches of literature in which we must find the proper nourishment for the moral and

æsthetic faculties are fiction and poetry. The streams of fiction that flood the land are more astounding in the volume and the rapidity of their currents than even those of popular science. Those who rack their brains with philosophy devote their leisure hours to the reading of fiction; those who consider science dry and poetry dull read fiction. What claim has it that it should afford the entire mental food of persons who have not learned to think, and the greater part of the supplies of many of those who have? It gives us no intellectual culture, and it would not be read if it did. It does not, in its loftiest purposes, pretend to expose those evils that are national or local, or to instruct us in history or in the art of government; and it is departing from its true sphere when it does. It cannot, therefore, be used as a vehicle for the diffusion of knowledge. It does and should induct us into a closer scrutiny of our hearts, and the secret springs of action which work themselves out in the innumerable intricacies of life. It teaches us to admire the nobility and laugh at the foibles of humanity. But in order to accomplish this exalted purpose, it must be the work of a master-hand—it must be the work of one who is able to trace the emotions of the heart in the actions of the life, and image them before us in a mirror that neither exaggerates nor deforms. We have fiction belonging to our own day of the highest order, but a vast amount of that which is eagerly devoured by readers not only falls infinitely below the highest rank, but absolutely fails to present the truth in its portraiture of life. Experience is all that it pretends to give, and, with most readers, the interest which attaches to it is just in proportion as that experience is false,

But the proper classification of fiction is, with poetry, under the head of art. Its chief aim is the culture of the æsthetic faculty, and when we apply to it the rules of art, the very same works will fall short of the standard as when judged by the former test; for truth is the first rule of art as well as of morals.

This inquiry reveals the existence, among a very large class in our age, of a taste that is woefully morbid,—a taste that is developed out of sympathies and emotions abnormally excited,—a taste which nothing but a sounder education will uproot, and which never will be uprooted until, among both sexes, the problems of history and science shall cease to be regarded with supercilious disdain.

In poetry—the other branch of artistic literature—our age is highly productive, though few of its productions are of the highest order. I have said that the first rule of art is truth. The second is beauty. The picture must be truth; beauty must be the setting. The truth of poetry must be that which addresses the heart rather than the intellect, and the truth that comes nearest the heart is surely the truth of the heart itself. This is peculiarly the subject with which our own poets have dealt. Tennyson, who is perhaps more read in our day than any other poet, is pre-eminently a poet of the heart. The beauty of his poetry is undisputed, and the light of the truth it contains, undimmed by a single spot of impurity, shines down upon us, not, indeed, with the lightning's glare, but rather with the mild splendour of a beautiful star. The poems of Tennyson, and writers of his school, are the certain index of the growth of a purer taste. The time has almost, if not

altogether, come when the idolatry of intellect, however depraved, must cease, and when it must be admitted that, bright as genius may be, virtue is brighter still.

Knowledge and virtue must, however, always exercise a reflex influence upon one another. Intellectual is not moral truth, but there is probably no intellectual truth in which moral truth is not to be found; and moral truth, or the truth that addresses the heart and its emotions, is always capable of poetry. Science seems to be pushing far ahead at present; but into that new region the future poet will follow, and fill up the landmarks of truth with the productions of his own creative fancy.

There is a cry raised now and then for a national poetry for our own young country, as if, forsooth, that would beget a national spirit, and lay the foundation of enduring greatness. We ought to have learned before now that poetry is impossible unless as the embodiment of truths which all men feel, and that national song is powerless unless it finds its key-note in some sentiment that touches the national heart. And, besides, it is not by the song that celebrates national scenery and national heroism that national spirit can now be enkindled. The spirit that inflamed the heart of the Greek at the sound of his country's lyre, that breathed through the sagas of our Saxon ancestry and awoke the strains of Border minstrelsy, has passed away for ever. The affections of men now reach beyond themselves. In order to move the heart, poetry must address a judgment that is clear and calm. National ambition must be something of which the judgment approves, and not the mere frenzy that passion begets. The only poetry

that can rouse men to action is that which strikes the heart-strings of universal humanity, and draws forth the harmony of virtue and benevolence.

In order to keep my address within proper limits, I must omit the remarks which I had intended to make upon the Satire and the Criticism, the Wit and the Humour, as they are developed in our literature, and also upon the literature that deals with Art. We would probably find from a study of the subject, that there is almost a total absence of works that deal with Art, as a study, and that there is, in our educational system, almost a complete want of anything that ministers directly to the improvement of man's æsthetic nature. The reason, however, is, that there has been no demand for such culture. Now that demand is just beginning to be made, and, doubtless, it will produce as great a revolution in that department of culture, as the cry for knowledge has done in the department of science. We would probably find, that our age has produced nothing that is worthy of the name of wit, that the humour which does appear could scarcely be surpassed for its worthlessness, and that the satire, if there is any *real* satire, is not much better. These things are, perhaps, necessities in an age that is pre-eminent for its restless utilitarianism. It has no time for elaborate witicism, nor leisure to dip into the deeper streams of humour. Fun must be on the very surface of life; our mirth must be made to order. We have not time to sit down and dream of life, until its ludicrousness flows in upon the heart and fills it with laughter. Few of our humourists ever draw laughter from the heart; they only make us smile. Again, ours is an age of ceaseless

eagerness. This may account for the absence of satire ; for there is no lack of the proper subjects for its lash. Men are in earnest about mighty purposes. The deliberate satirist must be a man who can separate himself from the bustle of life, and view it with a calmness that approaches indifference.

This is an age of many greatnesses and of many littlenesses also,—littlenesses which appear all the meaner from the contrast in which we see them. It is an age of extremes and extravagances. But we need not fear extravagances. The activity of life, even though it be disfigured by inconsistencies, is infinitely better than the stupor of death ; and the opposing interests of extremes is at least an indication that it is the golden mean of which we are in search. Progress is a chain of many links. Each link is a chain of itself, and its tendency will always be towards exaggeration. But the chain of progress is a unit still.

Gentlemen, we are links in that mighty chain. Its strength will depend on the manner in which we act our several parts. Our meeting to-night marks the beginning of another year,—the opening of another scene in the drama of life. It reminds us that new duties are pressing upon us. While I speak of the duties of the coming year, I am reminded that the year that is past has been an eventful one in the history of University College. This Society has had the honor of adding to its list of patrons the names of two men* already distinguished in the respective spheres of Philosophy and

* Rev. George Paxton Young, M.A., Professor of Metaphysics and Ethics ; H. Alleyne Nicholson, M.D., M.A., Ph.D., Professor of Natural History,

Science. But the year just past is also clustered round with cypress memories. We have lost two veteran Professors, under whom many generations of students have received their equipment for life. One,† who has withdrawn from the onerous duties of his Professorship, we follow with sincerest wishes for his welfare, into the shades of retirement. The other, after an honoured life, has been called away, in the ripeness of years, to his eternal rest. Already he has solved the mysteries of the great futurity. Some of us will never forget that day we saw the grave close over his dust; and those who can remember his genial manner, his cultured mind, his stainless life, and his large, generous, forgiving heart, will never cease to revere the memory of the late Rev. Professor Hincks.

But, to return to ourselves and the questions that are before us, Gentlemen, you are destined soon to go forth from these halls and to enter upon the loftier, broader, vaster activities of life. Here is the armoury where you are to be supplied with your weapons for its battles; here is the training-ground where you are to be disciplined in the use of them. The question of success or failure lies with yourselves. Your chances of victory will be in porportion to the skill you acquire here; it will depend entirely on how you spend your time now, whether you will look back on your college days with satisfaction or with regret.

Let me caution you against the blunder which, perhaps, the greater part of students commit—that of seeking an education without an aim. Life without an aim, distinctly in view, is a certain failure. Many a

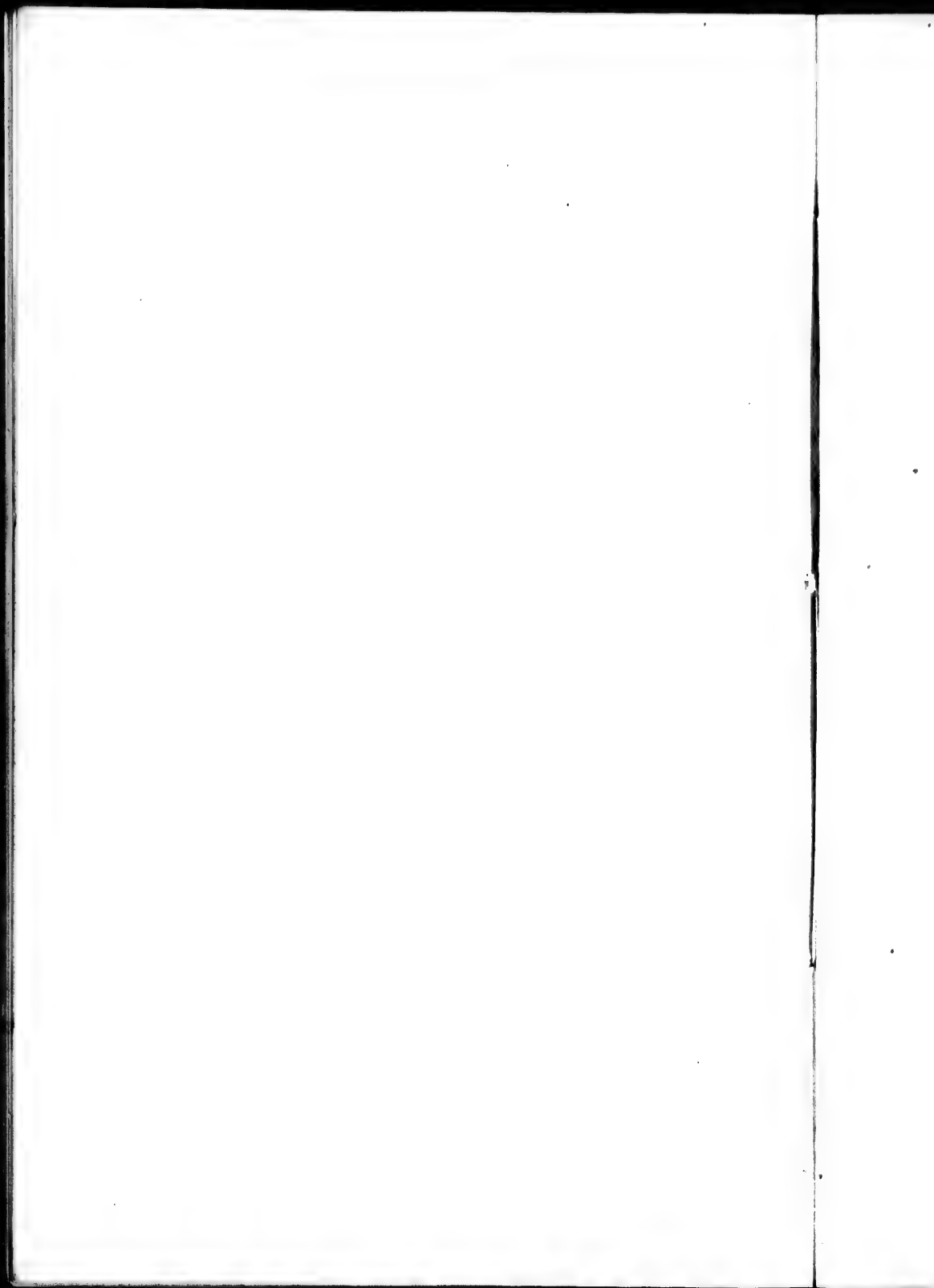
† Rev. James Beaven, D.D., Late Professor of Metaphysics and Ethics.

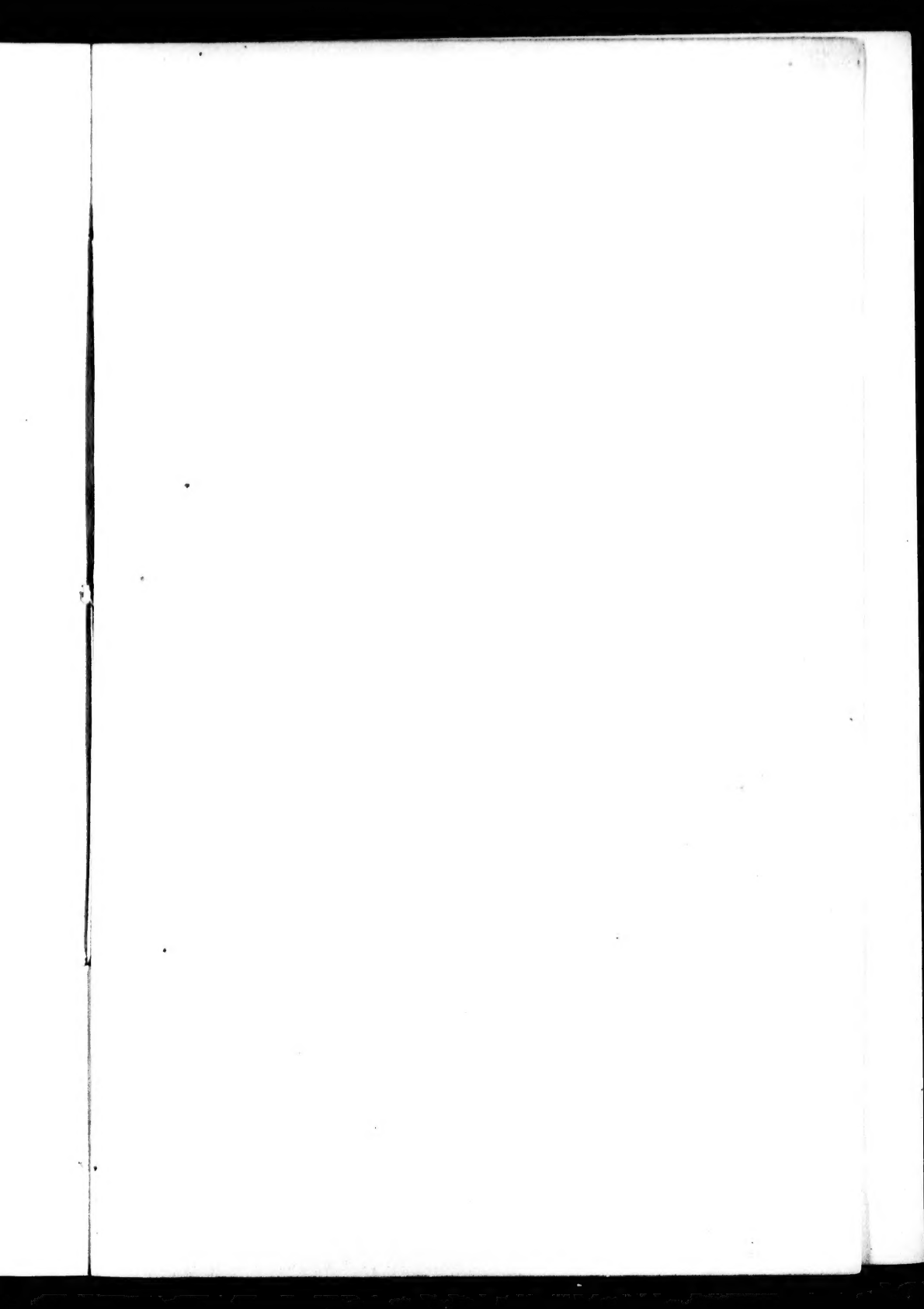
gifted mind has been lost to the world because its powers were not directed. Fix your plan for life ; and make all your studies and your reading minister directly towards the fulfilment of that plan. There is plenty of room for all your powers and all your activities. Humanity is calling for men to stand as interpreters between it and nature. It needs a Philosophy of History, a Science of Government, an improved critical taste, both moral and æsthetic, and a poetry that will ennoble the heart.

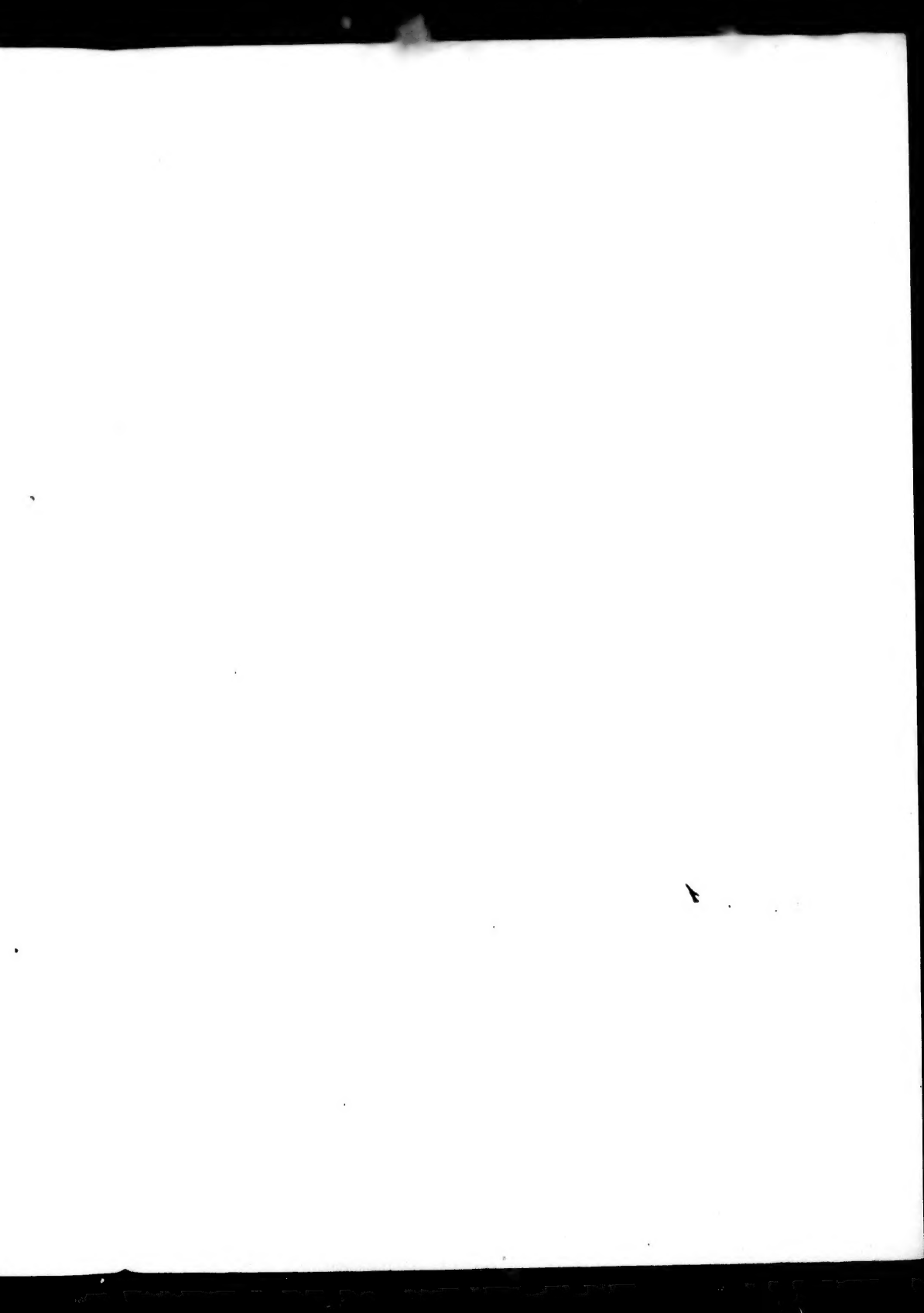
But wherever you fail, fail not to have your principles well established. *Moral principle* is a power that knows no limit. With it, you may prove a blessing to your country, and a benefactor to mankind ; without it, your life must end in bitterness and disgrace.

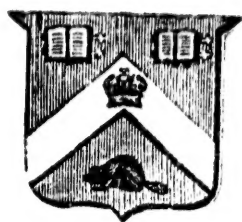
rs
ke
ly
of
u-
en
a
th
he

les
ws
ur
ur









Omnium regina rerum oratio.